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United for Quality Care

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Before the Appropriations Committee

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Andrea Mitchell and I have been a PCA for over a decade now. I live in Hartford. I'm a single mother of three: including one in college, and another with special needs. It's very hard to miss a single day of work, because like other single mothers like myself, we live paycheck to paycheck.

When we won our new Union contract last spring, I was so proud and pleased, because we won the first-ever paid time off benefit, 5 days per year for full-time workers. BUT ten months later, the State of CT hasn't implemented the benefit yet.

We all need paid sick time, but it can be a make-or-break issue for those of us who are single parents, and especially those of us with special needs kids. For example, there was a time when I wanted my son to attend a study at Yale New Haven hospital designed for kids with autism. But I couldn't take the time to go because it conflicted with work, and I couldn't afford to go without pay. Another reason is to maintain OUR health. We all get sick, but just knowing that when we are sick we can actually take that time off to rest and get better – tell me that doesn't give you that peace of mind, too. When my kids and I had COVID, I was out of work, and I knew I couldn't expose my consumer. But it was a very stressful time for me, and I got behind on rent.

Should only workers who are majority white and male be able to get treatment for their special needs kids? Should only white-collar workers who work behind desks have the right to keep a roof over their heads when they get COVID? Of course not. It's long overdue time that the State of CT brings the homecare field into the 21st century.

Freedom doesn't only mean not being incarcerated. Freedom also means the power to act and contribute to society in ways that also allow us to care for ourselves and our families. In this way, PCAs are not yet free, and that's what we're fighting for. We're asking you to fight for that with us, because none of us can be free until we're ALL free. We need to end poverty for all Long-Term-Care workers, including PCAs. Thank you.